



NEWS RELEASE

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Oct. 7, 2020

District Attorney Jackie Lacey Announces Major Advancements in How Criminal Justice System Interacts with Individuals with Mental Illness

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey today announced major advancements in the way police, prosecutors and others in the criminal justice system interact with individuals with mental illness.

The developments were sparked by the Los Angeles County Criminal Justice Mental Health Advisory Board, which District Attorney Lacey established in 2015 and continues to lead.

The Advisory Board created a thoughtful roadmap that encouraged stakeholders to embrace new, innovative and humane approaches to criminal justice reform in Los Angeles County. The Advisory Board's accomplishments are documented in a new report, "A Blueprint for Change: Five Years Later."

"By working together, we have realized significant change within our criminal justice system," District Attorney Lacey said. "We must stay on track and continue to develop and implement innovative approaches to helping people with mental illness get the services they need to stay healthy and live outside of the criminal justice system."

"I want to thank the Board of Supervisors for providing essential direction and support for our vision," she said. "I also want to thank all of the people who have helped us implement our recommendations for a countywide mental health plan. This commitment benefits the safety of our community, the safety of our first responders and the safety of family members, friends and neighbors with mental illness."

Through unprecedented collaboration, members of the Advisory Board came together in 2015 to address one of the most serious issues affecting Los Angeles County. Shortly after the initial report was released, the Board of Supervisors committed \$120 million to enhance housing and provide other resources to assist individuals with mental illness.

Since that time, the Advisory Board's accomplishments have included:

- Providing crisis intervention training, also known as de-escalation training, for nearly 11,000 police officers, sheriff's deputies and other first responders.

- Expanding specially trained co-response teams that partner patrol officers/deputies with licensed mental health clinicians to provide mental health support, crisis intervention/stabilization and appropriate psychiatric placement. These teams responded to nearly 15,000 incidents in fiscal year 2018-2019, up from 5,269 in fiscal year 2015-2016.
- Opening urgent care centers to accept individuals who are experiencing a mental health crisis and need a temporary (up to 72 hours), medically safe location to recover. The number of urgent care centers has doubled from four to eight since 2015. These centers provide law enforcement personnel with a safe alternative to incarceration and hospitalization for people in need of mental health services.
- Establishing the Los Angeles County Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR), led by retired Judge Peter Espinoza, to develop and implement countywide criminal diversion for individuals with mental and/or substance use disorders, provide reentry support services based on an individual's needs and reduce youth involvement with the criminal justice system. The office has provided permanent supportive housing to 2,910 homeless people.
- Launching three Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR) Courts that have removed 1,742 individuals from custody and placed them into permanent supportive housing and treatment, with a 90% retention rate.
- Assisting 4,444 individuals with mental illness secure permanent supportive housing in 195 project-based sites and in market-rate apartments. Ninety percent of them have retained permanent housing for at least 12 months.
- Increasing by 26 the number of Psychiatric Mobile Response Teams (PMRT) for a total of 83 teams that perform psychiatric evaluations for involuntary detention of individuals determined to be at risk of harming themselves or others or who are unable to provide food, clothing or shelter as a result of a mental disorder. The teams made a total of 20,489 field visits in fiscal year 2018-2019, up from 11,871 field visits in fiscal year 2015-2016.

Advisory Board members provided support for numerous pieces of legislation, including Assembly Bill 1810, which authorized pretrial diversion for individuals with mental illness and other bills that provided funding for housing and mental health services.

Within her office, District Attorney Lacey established the Mental Health Division, the first of its kind unit within a prosecutor's office in California and, possibly, the nation, dedicated to seeking alternatives to incarceration for individuals with mental illness.

District Attorney Lacey also hired a retired assistant Los Angeles police chief in 2016 to serve as her Mental Health Training Coordinator and design and teach California's first 16-hour crisis intervention training. Her office has provided free training to more than 2,000 local police officers on how to recognize a person with mental illness and safely de-escalate encounters with them.

Click [here](#) to view the A Blueprint for Change: Five Years Later report.

Click [here](#) to read the original report.

[About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#)

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.